



Virtual Convention of the Swedenborgian Church Friday, June 26 – Sunday, June 28, 2020

BY JANE SIEBERT

This pandemic is being defined by physical time and space. How much time do we have to flatten the curve? Where did it start? How long until we have a vaccine? When is the best time to open our economy back up? How much space do we need to have between individuals?

Many say time has slowed down, for some it has sped up, and there isn't time to get everything done. Some of us are tired of being confined; others are working in a space that may not feel safe. We are reminded that in the spiritual world time and space are relative to our spiritual state. It is all connected.

Swedenborg offers a way to ponder this deeper level of rationality.

Think whether love or any of its desires, whether wisdom or any of its perceptions, whether even your thought itself is in space and time, and you will discover that they are not. *Divine Providence* §49

Emotions are also on a rollercoaster:

from lonely isolation to feeling part of a greater whole; from deep sadness to overwhelming appreciation for a simple walk; from darkening confusion to glimpses of enlightenment as we spend time with our true selves. Life is hard, and yet the rays of joy break through and remind us: God is here in the midst of this pandemic.

For these reasons and more, The Virtual Convention Team has been imagining and creating a time and space that transcends the physical restraints of gathering in person. Our goal is to create a heavenly community from around the world, to worship together, and to learn more about Swedenborgian spirituality, and, most of all, how to use this love and wisdom to help us through this pandemic and its consequences in our lives.

From a hope to a dream to a team of knowledgeable and engaged volunteers, we bring you a unique opportunity to come together and transcend time and space.

Keynote Presentation: Rev. Dr. George Dole (p. 70)

Mini-Courses organized by: Rev. Dr. Jim Lawrence, Rev. Dave Brown (p. 70)

Worship Services and Music organized by: Rev. Roslyn Taylor, Rev. Cory Bradford-Watts, Rev. Susannah Currie, and Kurt Fekete (p. 73)

Outreach and Public Relations: Beki Greenwood (p. 66)

This edition of *the Messenger* is full of information about everything being offered. You can follow (and like) **Annual Swedenborgian Church Convention** on Facebook for the schedule and updates as they become available. (www.facebook.com/SwedenborgConvention) You do not need to be on Facebook to participate. There is more information at www.swedenborg.org

Broaden the Swedenborgian community and join us for all or part of *Spiritual Vision – Transcending Time and Space*. 

Details Inside:

**Virtual Convention Keynote Presentation, Mini-Course Line-Up,
Worship Services, Music & Meditations, plus more!**

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the Messenger

© The Swedenborgian Church of North America
Published monthly except July and August by
the Standing Committee for Communication and
Information of the Swedenborgian Church of
North America (founded 1817, incorporated 1861
as the General Convention of the New Jerusalem
in the United States of America), Rev. Jane
Siebert, president.

June 2020

Volume 244, No. 5, Whole Number 5450

Editor, design and production: Rebekah
Greenwood

Copy editing and proofing: Robert Leith, Herb
Ziegler & Trevor

Standing Committee for Communication and
Information: Holly Bauer, Kevin Baxter & Val
Brugler

Printing: Classic GraphX, Cambridge MA

Email: messenger@swedenborg.org

Editorial, Business and Subscription Address:
The Messenger, Central Office
50 Quincy Street
Cambridge MA 02138

Tel: 617.969.4240

Email: manager@swedenborg.org

Subscriptions: free online subscription at
<https://swedenborg.org/newsletter/>. Printed
and mailed to US address, \$20/year; to Canada
address, \$30/year; to all other addresses, \$35/
year; single copies, \$2.00. Libraries & prisoners,
free. Send check made out to "Swedenborgian
Church" with
"Messenger" on the memo line. Other requests,
write or call Central Office.

Deadline for submissions is three weeks before
the first day of the month of issue.

The opinions and views expressed are those of
the authors, not of *the Messenger*, the Standing
Committee for Communication and Information,
or the Swedenborgian Church.

Editor's Corner



New Ways to Build Community.

There has been a lot of negativity in the world lately. Oftentimes it is overshadowing some of the positive things that are happening out there while everyone has no choice but to navigate the world in a new way. Not only is the earth experiencing an unprecedented drop in CO2 emissions, the International Energy Agency reports that we're on track to use six percent less energy this year. What an amazing thing to see on our planet, and just a start to what we need to do to adjust the direction of climate change.

But what about what's happening with us? While we are being forced to stay apart, we are finding new ways to be together. Greeting card aisles are picked clean, the post office is behind schedule, people are secretly leaving presents for friends and kids on their porches. Simple things, but they are bringing everyone closer together. Look at our spiritual community—we've had the technology to do all of these virtual gatherings, but didn't have the time or proper motivation to put them together.

But now, teams are coming together to figure out how to mitigate the distance. Sure, we can't physically be together, but more of us can be together now than ever, from anywhere. Our virtual convention will be able to reach people worldwide, and now our camps are following suit. Never been able to go to Almont, Fryeburg, or Paulhaven? Virtual camps are being planned for all three! (see p. 80) Online church services are bringing in more parishoners than usually come in person, and if

anyone can't make it to the live church service, most are saved online and can just be enjoyed when you do have the time. What a brilliant thing for all of us in what is usually a very busy world. We're starting a Swedenborgian Book Club (see p. 79), another simple way that we can broaden our connectivity—why did this take us so long?

All of these things certainly can't replace the magic of being together in a sacred space that we love. But imagine how we can enhance it in the future. The pandemic has changed all of us, forever. Let's embrace the changes we face, share them with others, and be connected, no matter where we are. I will see you out there—I can't wait to see you in person or on a screen.

—Beki Greenwood

Messenger@Swedenborg.org



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SwedenborgianCommunity.org

With broadcasts every Thursday & Sunday, Swedenborgian Community Online is your affirming, interfaith, Swedenborgian community—with a presence on YouTube, Facebook, and your favorite podcast platform. We seek to uplift God(dess) in all people's diverse ways of living.

Message from the Treasurer



Due to the recent turbulence in the stock market and economy, the Investment Committee sent a letter in early May of this year to all participants in the Common Fund. This article is a reprise of that communication for the benefit of all of General Convention.

The spread of COVID-19 sent equity and energy markets tumbling during Q1, 2020. An eleven-year bull market that began in March, 2009 officially ended in March, 2020 with the quickest market peak to bear market territory in U.S. economic history. The Fed responded by lowering interest rates while the U.S. government passed multiple stimulus packages aimed at bolstering the shut-down economy. New cases and deaths due to COVID-19 have continued to increase in multiple locations. A U.S. economic recession has begun with Q1, 2020 GDP contracting by 4.8% and the unemployment rate quickly approaching 15%.

The Common Fund is designed to protect and preserve asset value during such periods of market declines. It is designed to be a bit conservative with its allocations among equities (both U.S. and international), real estate, fixed income (intermediate and short-term Treasuries), and cash. Thus, it is designed not to increase as much as the stock market in a bull market so that it will not decline as much as the stock market in a bear market. Our Common Fund account did incur a reduction in value during Q1, 2020 of 14.8% while the S&P 500 declined 19.6%

Each year, the Investment Committee reviews the asset allocation, assesses investment managers, and rebalances the portfolio as needed. While the portfolio is not immune to incurring a loss, we remain calm, patient, and disciplined by adhering to our established Investment Policy Statement. Due to the Investment Committee not making any panicked decisions, the Common Fund regained 7.15% in value during the month of April, 2020.

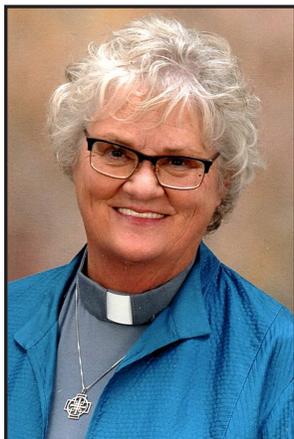
For historic perspective, the [table on page 79](#) presents the annual rate of return for the Common Fund over different periods of time. The numbers in parenthesis indicate the Common Fund's performance rank as compared to its peer group of other religious, academic, and charitable endowments. The Common Fund has consistently performed in the top quintile and occasionally reached the top decile of its peers.

Please rest assured that the quarterly payout of \$0.3125 per unit will continue unchanged for the remainder of 2020. The quarterly payout has steadily increased over the past four years. While the Common Fund did not distribute all of its gains during the bull market, the undistributed gains were able to be reinvested which grew the overall value of the portfolio (and the value of the units held in each participant account). This allows for a more stable payout during these turbulent times.

The Investment Committee will meet in October 2020 to set the payout rate for 2021. At this time, without an additional significant drop in the markets, there is no indication that the payout rate will need to be reduced for 2021. The Common Fund is well positioned to recover along with the overall market and continue to generate returns that we can rely on for years to come.

Thank you for your continued confidence in the Common Fund. If you have any questions, please contact me.

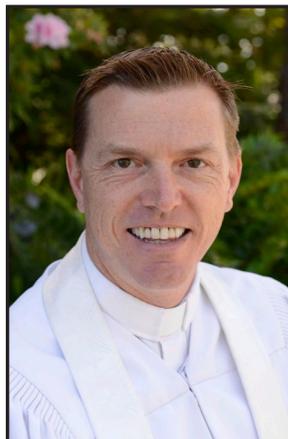
—*Treasurer, Jennifer Lindsay*
Treasurer@Swedenborg.org

Virtual Convention Planning Committee

Rev. Jane Siebert
President, Swedenborgian
Church of North America



Rev. Cory Bradford-Watts
Swedenborgian Community
Online Minister



Rev. David Brown
Director of Ministry
Wayfarers Chapel



Rev. Susannah Currie
Chair of the Council of
Ministers (COM)

Schedule of Events

2020 SPIRITUAL VISON – TRANSCENDING TIME AND SPACE

Friday, June 26

- 7:00 PM — **Welcome and Greetings** to our first Virtual Convention
by Rev. Jane Siebert with musical prelude by Pastor Paul Deming
- 7:15 PM — Virtual Parade of Ministries – Part 1
- 7:45 PM — President's Report – Rev. Jane Siebert
- 8:00 PM — Virtual Parade of Ministries – Part 2
- 8:30 PM — **Evening Musical Meditation** with Pastor Christine Campbell

Saturday, June 27

- 1:00 PM — **Memorial Worship Service**
with Rev. Rachel Madjerac with musical prelude by Rev. Ken Turley
- 2:00 PM — **Keynote Presentation** entitled *For Heaven's Sake*
by Rev. Dr. George F. Dole with an introduction from
Rev. Dr. Jim Lawrence, followed by live Q&A
- 3:00 PM — Mini-Course: *Spiritual Cinema: Swedenborg at the Movies*
with Dr. Devin Zuber,
followed by live Q&A
- 4:00 PM — Mini-Course: *The Death of God in T.S. Eliot; The Death of the Church in Swedenborg* with Rev. Dr. David Fekete,
followed by live Q&A
- 5:00 PM — Mini-Course: *Blessed are the Peacemakers: How You and Your Church Can Successfully Facilitate Political Dialogue in a Polarized Society*
with Rev. Rich Tafel, followed by live Q&A

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Virtual Convention Planning Committee

Kurt Fekete
Youth Director of the
Swedenborgian Church



Beki Greenwood
Editor,
the Messenger



Rev. Dr. Jim Lawrence
Dean, Center for
Swedenborgian Studies



Rev. Roslyn Taylor
Chair of the
Committee on Worship

Schedule of Events

2020 SPIRITUAL VISON – TRANSCENDING TIME AND SPACE

7:00 PM — **Swedenborgian Church Youth League Worship Service**,
followed by live Q&A with Youth Leader Kurt Fekete & the SCYL Officers

Sunday, June 28

- 1:45 PM — **Opening of Final Day** by Rev. Jane Siebert with musical prelude by Bet Giddings
- 2:00 PM — Mini-Course: ***Disability, Divinity & The Divine Human: Helen Keller's Spiritual Legacy*** with Rev. Sage Cole, followed by live Q&A
- 3:00 PM — Mini-Course: ***Finding Church Beyond the Walls: Reimagining Church in the Time of Covid*** with Rev. Anna Woofenden,
followed by live Q&A
- 4:00 PM — Mini-Course: ***The Harmonic One: Suggestions of Divine Plurality in the Bible and in Swedenborg*** with Dr. Rebecca Esterson,
followed by live Q&A
- 5:00 PM — Mini-Course: ***Near-Death Studies and Swedenborg's Spiritual World***
with Rev. Dr. Jim Lawrence, followed by live Q&A
- 7:00 PM — **Closing Worship Service with Communion** with Pastor Paul Deming,
Rev. Kevin Baxter, Rev. Sage Cole, Rev. Youngmin Kim, and Rev. Shada Sullivan
musical prelude and postlude by Angela Papierski and interlude by Karen Conger.
Closing of Convention by Rev. Jane Siebert

All events will be taking place on Facebook live on the **Annual Swedenborgian Church Convention** page. You do not need to have Facebook to participate, the stream will be available on Swedenborg.org. Join in worship services a few minutes early to enjoy the music being offered and stay on the live stream for Question and Answer sessions. All times are listed in EDT. ☩

Keynote Presentation and Mini-Courses

At every annual convention of the Swedenborgian Church, mini-courses are offered; Virtual Convention will be no exception. There is a variety of exciting and interesting courses to choose from: go to one, or go to them all. We have seven offerings plus a keynote by Rev. Dr. George Dole. Attendees are invited to comment throughout the live streams in the comments section then to join us on Zoom to enjoy a few minutes of live questions and answers with each presenter.

Keynote Presentation For Heaven's Sake

Saturday, June 27, at 2:00 PM

Rev. Dr. George F. Dole

Rev. Dr. George Dole will take a look at our pandemic turmoil through a Swedenborgian lens, seeing the true New Jerusalem as the Lord's intent, and suggesting where our little church may be finding itself on this global stage.



Rev. Dr. George F. Dole was ordained by the General Convention of the New Jerusalem in 1960 and has since served it as both a pastor and teacher. He received a B.A. in Classics

from Yale in 1952 (Phi Beta Kappa), an M.A. in Hebrew from Oxford in 1958, and a Ph.D. in Assyriology from Harvard (1965), which was granted with distinction. After serving as pastor of our church in Cambridge, he joined the faculty of the then New Church Theological School, serving it through its several name changes until his retirement in 1999. During those years he authored a number of books on Swedenborgian themes and was one of the principal translators of Swedenborg's theological works for the New

Century Edition. He continues research and writing, with a book entitled *The High Cost of Vision: Critical Years of Emanuel Swedenborg's Life*—now in the capable hands of the Swedenborg Foundation's copy editor, and now Rev. Dr. Dole is well into the research stage of a book on Swedenborg's mid-career "course correction"—so obvious once it is pointed out. Throughout all this, he has been most deeply blessed by his marriage to Lois, the co-parenting of their five children, and the familial love and understanding that has continued to deepen over the years.

Mini-Courses

Spiritual Cinema: Swedenborg at the Movies

Saturday, June 27, at 3:00 PM

Dr. Devin Zuber

Encountering a great work of art can sometimes transform us—the philosopher George Steiner writes that experiencing art which contains “real presences” can create the bittersweet wish to have once led a better life (to paraphrase). How might watching movies help us on our respective paths of spiritual regeneration? This interactive mini-course is part historical, part experiential sharing, and comes out of research I have done on the Swedish filmmaker Ingmar Bergman and his encounters with Swedenborgian thought (which largely emerges from my time spent as a fellow in Bergman's house and library on Fårö island, Sweden, in 2016). We will explore the surprising occult and esoteric roots of early cinematic history, from Sergei Eisenstein to Vachel Lindsay—the great Illinois poet, mystic, and deep reader of William Blake and Swedenborg who also happened to write the first American book of film theory and criticism, published in 1915. We will also share and draw from our own experiences of how movie watching might form a kind of spiritual practice, and open us up to a different relationship

to time and space: an experience of what the filmmaker Nathaniel Dorsky has called “devotional cinema.” Participants are encouraged to watch two Ingmar Bergman classics on their own in advance of this mini-course (though this is not required): *The Seventh Seal* (1957), and *Wild Strawberries* (1957).



Dr. Devin Zuber teaches at the Center for Swedenborgian Studies (CSS) at the Graduate Theological Union, Berkeley, California. At the GTU, he is chair for the Department of Historical and

Cultural Studies of Religion, and also co-leads Sustainability 360, a new incubator for the environmental humanities at the GTU. His recent book *A Language of Things: Swedenborg and the American Environmental Imagination*, was published by UVA Press in December 2019, and has recently been nominated for the Borsch-Rast Prize. Current research and teaching interests in addition to Swedenborg include countercultural poetry and art of the 1960s, and the status of spirituality in contemporary art. When he's not teaching or gardening, he likes to spend time catching waves on a surfboard out at Bolinas.

The Death of God in T.S. Eliot; The Death of the Church in Swedenborg

Saturday, June 27, at 4:00 PM

Rev. Dr. David Fekete

T.S. Eliot images the death of God in his poems “The Waste Land,” and “The Love Song of J Alfred Prufrock.” The death of God ideology pervades our society. And church attendance across denominational lives is dwindling—for Jews, Christians, and Muslims.

Eliot describes a process that

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Virtual Mini-Courses

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Swedenborg explains. When a new church is being established, the former church must die out completely. The new church is not established from the former church, but from those we would call “unchurched,” or the Gentiles.

We will look at Eliot’s poetry and discuss the currency of his death of God imagery. Then we will look at citations from Swedenborg, examining the larger question about the death of the Old Church. While we are bearers of enlightened doctrines, are we, in fact, part of the Old Church which must die out? These challenging issues will be discussed together as we read through Eliot and Swedenborg.



Rev. Dr. Dave Fekete is a proud graduate of Urbana University, Harvard University, and the University of Virginia. Having served as the president of the Edmonton Interfaith

Center for Education and Action, he has attended and presented in numerous international interfaith conventions. He is on the Academic Senate, D.Min. Program Committee, and is associate faculty at Saint Stephen’s College.

Blessed are the Peacemakers: How You and Your Church Can Successfully Facilitate Political Dialogue in a Polarized Society

Saturday, June 27, at 5:00 PM

Rev. Rich Tafel

Our nation is at one of the worst moments of polarization since the Civil War. There are few spaces where people of differing viewpoints can still come together and be treated with respect and an open heart. Most

churches fear to play any role in controversial political debates. This mini-course will make the case that churches should play the role of facilitator of diverse dialogues. Our tradition is unique in following a mystic who also served in government and politics.

This course will give participants a concrete understanding of the six prominent value systems debated in American life. It will offer specific examples of how to build peacemaking in our culture by facilitating discussion. Participants will be encouraged to try to role-play various viewpoints for the group. Anyone interested in developing their ability to see multiple viewpoints and live out the role of peacemaker in our culture will benefit from this course.

Rev. Tafel frequently facilitates topical discussions in his church. He will share personal examples of his life in the political arena.

Rev. Rich Tafel is a national leader in the intersection of faith and politics. He serves as pastor at the Church of the Holy City, located in the heart of Washington D.C., a few



blocks from the White House. While most churches seek to keep politics outside, Rev. Tafel has pioneered bringing challenging political topics into the Sunday worship service and events for a facilitated dialogue. Rev. Tafel has a long history in politics, managing a campaign in 1990 and serving as an appointee to Governor Weld (R-MA) in 1991, and in 1993, he founded Log Cabin Republicans as a bridge between the LGBT community and conservative Americans. He was one of the first public champions for gay marriage. In 1999, he authored the book *Party Crasher*. In 2017, he was chosen as the director of the American Project, which is a think tank focused on a future, healthy conservative movement, a program of Pepperdine School of Public Policy. In 2019, he authored the *Quillette* magazine piece, “Understanding

America’s Cultural and Political Realignment,” which lays out a values-based understanding of political positions in America.

Disability, Divinity, & The Divine Human: Helen Keller’s Spiritual Legacy

Sunday, June 28, at 2:00 PM

Rev. Sage Cole

Helen Keller was a woman with a mystic sense and a deep faith that drove her not to just overcome her own limitations, but to work for the liberation of others. In this mini-course we will explore Helen’s life from the lens of faith and justice. We will explore how Helen’s Swedenborgianism influenced her and how we may be able to better understand and live our faith as Swedenborgians through her example. This mini-course will touch on key moments and movements in her most incredible life, including meeting W.E.B. Dubois, joining the Socialist Party, speaking at the Swedenborgian General Conventions of 1919 and 1928, and being among the first Americans to visit Hiroshima after WWII—and much more!

Rev. Sage Cole is the Pastor and Director of Swedenborg Chapel in Cambridge, Massachusetts, and vision caster for the Helen Keller Spiritual Life Center (www.hkslc.org).



Ordnained into the ministry of the Swedenborgian Church in 2005, Sage has served in a variety of settings: first pastor of www.swedenborgiancommunity.org, associate pastor at The Church of the Holy City in Wilmington, Delaware, pastor of the Fryeburg New Church, and for six years as a hospice chaplain in Southern Maine. Sage lives with her husband and two young sons in Jamaica Plain, Massachusetts.

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Virtual Mini-Courses

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Finding Church Beyond the Walls: Reimagining Church in the Time of Covid

Sunday, June 28, at 3:00 PM

Rev. Anna Woofenden

In this session, Rev. Anna will explore stories of reimagining church and lessons learned at the Garden Church that can apply to all of us who are reimagining church during the time of COVID-19.



Rev. Anna Woofenden is the founding pastor of The Garden Church in San Pedro, California, and is the founder of Feed and Be Fed Farm. Rev. Woofenden now lives in Massachusetts,

where she is a chaplain, pastor, consultant, and the co-host of the Food and Faith Podcast (foodandfaithpodcast.org). She is the author of *This is God's Table: Finding Church Beyond the Walls*. She is passionate about spirituality, justice, food, the earth, and community, and is driven by a calling to reimagine church. AnnaWoofenden.com

The Harmonic One: Suggestions of Divine Plurality in the Bible and in Swedenborg

Sunday, June 28, at 4:00 PM

Dr. Rebecca Esterson

“Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one” (Deuteronomy 6:4)

There are two unexpected things about this foundational statement in its original Hebrew form. The word for “one,” *echad*, is etymologically related to the word *yachad*, or “together.” Second, the word for God, *Elohim*, appears in the plural form. These are perhaps surprising grammatical notes, given the semantic meaning of the

statement. What are we to do with the seeming contradictions? Is there any wisdom to be learned from this?

For Swedenborgians, the oneness of God is a fundamental teaching, often appearing in pamphlets and on websites as the first bullet point in a list of key doctrines. However, when we investigate this teaching, we find that it is not some simple creed or code to be used to set us apart from other religions, those who we might tag as Trinitarian or polytheistic. This is a misuse of the doctrine. Rather, the teaching suggests a view of God that is dynamic, multifaceted, reflecting the infinite variety of the created world, and even suggests a vision for religious pluralism. This mini-course will explore Swedenborg's concept of the “harmonic one” and his suggestion that “in God there are infinite things” (*Divine Love and Wisdom* §19).



Dr. Rebecca Esterson teaches courses on biblical interpretation, Swedenborgian theology, Jewish-Christian relations, and death and immortality, at our

denomination's seminary in Berkeley, California. She is also co-editor of the journal *Teaching Theology and Religion at the Graduate Theological Union*.

Near-Death Studies and Swedenborg's Spiritual World

Sunday, June 28, at 4:00 PM

Rev. Dr. Jim Lawrence

Swedenborg strove, in his final science study of anatomy, to prove existence of a soul to an increasingly disbelieving intelligentsia. Though failing to find the soul in a laboratory, he produced the first correct brain location theories and the first accurate description of physiological results of deep

meditation by being the first to deduce that the brain undulates in concert with the lungs (i.e., with breathing).

Some say Swedenborg found the soul in his subsequent spiritual visions and experiences, and his consequent religious writings have been identified by history of religion scholars as the first spiritualist literature. Dubbed both a scientist and a seer, his career proved foundational for nineteenth-century enthusiasm for seances and belief in the immediate presence of a spiritual realm of departed souls. The London-based Society for Psychical Research (1882) and the American Society for Psychical Research (1884) both frequently referenced Swedenborg as a case study.

The quest for establishing the soul's immortality found new footing in the last quadrant of the twentieth century beginning with psychiatrist Raymond Moody's 1975 *Life After Life*, a research study of near-death experiences indicating that clinical evidence weights toward personal consciousness as ultimately independent of a physical body. Moody includes Swedenborg in a short-list of four history “parallels” for his incipient research. Rev. Lawrence will summarize the latest research and reflect on how near-death studies line up with Swedenborg's spiritual world.



Rev. Dr. Jim Lawrence served for seventeen years in congregational leadership and nineteen years as the Dean of the theological school. He saw Swedenborg's name for the

first time in 1976 while reading Raymond Moody's now legendary book, *Life after Life*, which unleashed the modern study of near-death experiences. He remains a student of the field of research and believes the questions that continually arise are important for our increasingly science-minded world. ☒

Worship Services, Music, and Meditations

Evening Musical Meditation

Friday, June 26, at 8:15 PM
Pastor Christine Campbell

As we wind down on Friday evening, Pastor Christine Campbell will lead us to our hearts with a musical meditation. She calls us into direct communion with the “Holy” beginning with “Come Holy Jesus,” which she wrote as a child, concluding with “You are Mine,” by David Hass.



Christine Campbell serves as pastor and director at Temenos Retreat and Sanctuary, near Philadelphia. She has worked as a professional musician for over forty years in many genres as

both singer and pianist. Early on, she worked mainly as soprano soloist in many churches in Philadelphia and New York while also singing with the Opera Company Of Philadelphia. She worked in jazz and played the folk circuit during that time also. Christine’s main love and concentration is sacred music from many traditions. She has served as soloist, choral director, liturgist, and music minister at many larger churches in the tri-stated area. Christine continues to play and sing for all church services at Temenos along with being the pastor. She also sings in the greater community and is creating a new larger piece in the works for early fall.

Memorial Worship Service

Saturday, June 27, at 1:00 PM
Rev. Rachel Madjerac
Musical Prelude by Rev. Ken Turley

The annual Memorial Worship Service is an opportunity to celebrate the lives of those who have passed into the spiritual world during the previous year as well as remembering other loved ones who have passed on. The service will be led by Rev. Rachel Madjerac, from the Wayfarers Chapel,

in Rancho Palos Verdes, California. We will also enjoy a musical prelude by former denomination president, Rev. Ken Turley.

At the beginning of the service, Rev. Rachel will invite people to type the names of those who have passed on that you wish to lift up. At any time during the service, or while the minister is lighting memorial candles, you will have the opportunity to type in the names in the comment section next to the video on the Facebook page. If you would like to send any names ahead of time to be lifted up, please email Rev. Roslyn Taylor (hrtaylor@temple.edu) by Wednesday, June 24. She will add those names to the Facebook Live comments throughout the service.



Rev. Rachel Madjerac was ordained at the 2018 Annual Convention. She earned her Master of Divinity degree from the Pacific School of Religion at the Graduate Theological Union in Berkeley,

California. Previously, she worked as a hospital chaplain in Hawaii and San Diego. Rev. Rachel is originally from New England and serves as the Ministry Coordinator and as a Rites and Sacraments Minister at Wayfarers Chapel.

Rev. Ken Turley graduated from the Swedenborg School of Religion in Newton, was ordained in 1985, and served General Convention as a pastor for thirty years. He began in Massachusetts helping to revive



Blairhaven Summer Camp along with serving the Elmwood New Church, then moving to the church in Portland, Maine, where a lively congregation developed around a folk music-led informal style of worship and community

events; and, finally, serving for nearly fourteen years at the Fryeburg New Church and the Fryeburg New Church Assembly summer camp. His last six years were serving as president of General Convention. Throughout his time of service, Ken and his wife Laurie, regularly contributed to the Annual Convention worship and music. Now retired and living in Maine, Rev. Ken devotes his time to composing, playing, recording, performing, and publishing music; gardening; and Skyping with his grandchildren.

SCYL Worship Service

Saturday, June 27, at 7:00 PM
Swedenborgian Church Youth League



Teenagers from around North America will lead an inspired video worship service entitled *The Gift of the Struggle*, with musical prelude and postlude, followed by a live Q&A session with Youth Director Kurt Fekete and the SCYL Officers.

Opening of Final Day with Musical Prelude

Sunday, June 28, at 1:45 PM
Rev. Jane Siebert
Musical Prelude by Bet Giddings

Bet Giddings served as Music Director at the Bridgewater New Jerusalem Church from 2004 to 2019. She continues to enjoy singing in choral groups, playing piano



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at special events and weddings, leading sacred circle dance gatherings, and teaching chair yoga to seniors. Bet is also a licensed mental health counselor with many years experience working in community mental health and hospice bereavement programs. She has four adult children and four lively grandchildren. Bet lives with her husband, Jeff, in southeastern Massachusetts.

Closing Worship Service with Communion

Sunday, June 28, at 7:00 PM

Pastor Paul Deming, Rev. Kevin

Baxter, Rev. Sage Cole,

Rev. Youngmin Kim,

& Rev. Shada Sullivan

Musical Prelude & Postlude by

Angela Papierski, Interlude by

Karen Conger

Closing of Convention by Presi-

dent Rev. Jane Siebert

The Closing Worship Service with Communion will conclude our Virtual Convention. Rev. Kevin Baxter will lead the liturgy, Rev. Shada Sullivan will share the readings, Rev. Youngmin Kim will offer Communion, and Pastor Paul Deming will be the Convention Preacher.

In preparation for the Closing Worship with Communion, we invite you to provide your own wine or other beverage, as well as your bread or bread substitute, ready to be consecrated and taken during the communion portion of the service.

Immediately following the service, Rev. Jane Siebert will be offering the closing of the Word and concluding our virtual convention.

Pastor Paul Deming has been playing and writing music since he was nine years old. His song "From the Rising of the Sun"



was published by Integrity Music in several languages and has appeared in several hymnals in the United States.

Now lead guitarist for the popular St. Louis band the Ralph Butler Band, Paul divides his time between teaching music at Rohan Woods School, giving private guitar lessons, and serving as Licensed Pastor at the Church of the Open Word / Garden Chapel in St. Louis.



Rev. Kevin K. Baxter is a pastor at the Boston Society of The New Jerusalem (Church on the Hill), which is an unaffiliated Swedenborgian congregation. A graduate of the Pacific School of

Religion, he graduated and was ordained in 2004. He also serves as the director for Almont Summer School in Allenton, Michigan. In the past, he has served as a chaplain, pastor, administrator, editor, and also as the Chair of the Council of Ministers.

Rev. Shada Sullivan is the pastor of The Church of the Holy City in Wilmington, Delaware. She grew up in the Australian New Church and moved to the United States in 1994 to attend Bryn Athyn College. She was ordained in the Swedenborgian Church of North America in 2017.



Rev. Youngmin Kim lives in Clinton Hill, Brooklyn, New York, with his devoted wife, Esther, and two children, Keyman and Aileen. Rev. Kim has served The Mirral Church (d/b/a Korean New Church) located

in a culturally diverse section of Brooklyn, for twenty-five years. In this capacity, he has worked to build a relationship of understanding and respect between other cultures and the Korean community. He is a positive force in solving ethnic issues with the Korean businessmen and the Black community by getting the Korean businessmen to employ more residents of the

Black community.

He established the Korean Youth Festival and the Senior/Youth Intergenerational Programs; both programs have highlighted the importance of making both our youth and seniors more aware of the on-going dialogue, participation, and education as a team in the Korean community. He has received numerous awards from the community including the Asian American Heritage Award, the Distinguished Ecumenical Award, the Community Leadership Award, and Son of Micah Award from New Utrecht Reformed Church.

Angela Papierski began formal piano lessons at age five. She attended Berklee College of Music following high school, but lack of funds forced her to withdraw before graduation.

After more than a decade-long hiatus from music-making, her desire to pursue music professionally was reawakened, and soon she enrolled part-time at UMass Boston to finish her B.A. in Music, graduating with highest honors in December 2007. In addition to serving as worship organist at the Swedenborg Chapel in Cambridge, Massachusetts, and is the Interim Office Manager for the Swedenborgian Church of North America, Angela is a piano teacher with many students in the Greater Boston area. She lives in Cambridge with her husband, Kevin, their two geriatric dogs, Sally and Amie, and their noisy lovebird, Rover.



Karen Conger is a lifelong, third generation Swedenborgian who was raised in the Church of the Holy City in Washington, D.C. She has been a member of both the Urbana and Los

Angeles Societies, and a member-at-large of the Pacific Coast Association (PCA). She has served on the Ministries Support Unit for several years, the Nominating Committee more than once, and was the Secretary of the PCA for many years, as well as holding elected positions on the Board of Directors of the Los Angeles Society and the Wayfarers Chapel Board of Directors. She now serves as the Secretary of the General Convention. ☪

The Year of the Lord

The Name of the Lord

BY ROBERT EVAN MCCLUSKEY

In days gone by, one's name often reflected one's occupation. The surnames Baker, Butler, Cook, and Miller, are obvious examples. Nowadays, of course, such names have for the most part become divorced from their origins. But in the Bible, each name has its real significance, not as an arbitrary label, nor as a sign of biological lineage, but as a description of a particular spiritual quality. This is how names are used throughout scripture: to represent and describe spiritual qualities and callings. For instance, Moses means "drawn out." Just as Moses was drawn out of the Nile when he was an infant, he would go on to "draw out" the Hebrews from slavery in Egypt. The name Adam (ha-adam) comes from the word for ground (ha-da-mah), from which he was made. Zechariah means "God remembers."

There are indeed many names for God, the Holy One, the Divine, across time, cultures and religions. But what are these names, and what do they mean? What can they tell us about the nature of God that would make a difference in our lives? This article will focus on the names of God as they appear in the Bible, the foundational document of Christianity. And, as a short article on a big topic, I can only offer a few clues for those eager to follow the trail.

We begin with the Hebrew Scriptures, right at Genesis 1:1, where God is called *Elohim*. This is actually a plural noun derived from "el," which means strength or might. *Elohim* is the creator God; the one who creates the heavens and the earth, including human beings in God's image. Here *Elohim* is not so much a name as a

title, like boss or master; the supreme authority (cf. Tillich: *The Ultimate Ground of Being*). The word *Elohim* is a somewhat generic term for God and had been in use among the other nations long before Abraham was called out of his home.

There are indeed many names for God, the Holy One, the Divine, across time, cultures and religions. But what are these names, and what do they mean?

But soon after, in Genesis 2:4, it is the Lord as *Yahweh* who creates Adam and Eve, and begins a unique relationship with humanity. More than a supreme authority, we have a slightly more personal notion of God in *Yahweh*: though still invisible and incorporeal, here is a speaking God, a supreme being. Just as quickly the familiar phrase "the Lord your God" (*Yahweh Eloheka*) becomes frequent throughout the whole Bible.

In Exodus 3:13–15, the significance of this name is made blazingly clear to Moses at the burning bush. But Moses said to God, "If I come to the Israelites and say to them, 'The God of your ancestors has sent me to you,' and they ask me, 'What is his name?' what shall I say to them?" God said to Moses, "I am who I am." He said further,

Thus you shall say to the Israelites, 'I am has sent me to you.'" God also said to Moses, "Thus you shall say to the Israelites, 'The Lord, the God of your ancestors, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, has sent me to you': This is my name forever, and this my memorial for all generations."

Derived from the Hebrew verb "to be," *Yahweh* is translated as "I am that I am," or "I will be what I will be."

Here we see that God's name very much corresponds to his "occupation," his work. The Creator God is revealed as *Yahweh*, "the Lord"—not just the distant source of all that is, but existence itself. In the Lord we begin to have a more personal encounter with the Divine—a God who speaks and listens, sees and hears, who walks with us on our journey through history. The Lord is the God of the Covenant.

In general, I tend to see these two primary names of God in creative tension, *Elohim* as abstract, universal, distant, impersonal, transcendent—beyond experience, and *Yahweh* (the Lord) as concrete, particular, historically situated, personal, imminent; within experience. The classic motif used to describe the relationship between these two aspects of God, these two ways that we experience the unity of the Lord our God, is that of father and son.

In the Christian Scriptures these distinctions are retained, merely moving from Hebrew to Greek. *Elohim* (God) becomes *Theos*, and *Yahweh* (Lord) becomes *Kurios*. The Lord your God becomes *kurios theos*. So far, so good. But what about Jesus? Is "Jesus Christ" a new name for God? Yes and no.

NO: He begins as *Yeshua*, a common name in Jewish culture. We know it as Joshua, meaning "God saves." But along the way, he acquires a new identity. Well into his ministry, he asks Peter, "Who do you say that I am?" Peter answers, "You are the Christ, the son

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A Journey to South Africa

BY ANNETTE WOOFENDEN

Africans are especially valued in heaven. They accept the good and true things of heaven more readily than others do.

Emanuel Swedenborg,
Heaven and Hell §326

The moment David Mooki stepped across the threshold of a furniture shop in Krugersdorp, South Africa, beckoned by a cluster of used books for sale, the trajectory of his life changed. The impulse purchase that upended his life? *True Christian Religion*, by Emanuel Swedenborg. That was the day that the seed of Swedenborg's teachings began growing among Black South Africans.

The year was 1909. At thirty-three years old, the Rev. David Mooki was an ordained minister of the African Catholic Mission Church. He had a young family to support. And he was a Black man living in a land controlled by the British and by Afrikaners. A new government called the Union of South Africa was being formed that would give sole political control to Whites, who constituted less than fifteen percent of the population. It would also spawn the schema whereby Blacks would be degraded, stripped of personal freedoms, and subjected to slavery-like conditions.

On January 24, 1911, David Mooki and some fellow ministers broke away from the African Catholic Mission Church and founded what was then named the New Church Mission in Africa, later renamed the New Church of Southern Africa (NCSA). Its teachings were based on the writings of Emanuel Swedenborg. In his quest to establish this new church and spread Swedenborg's message, Rev. Mooki struggled against numerous bureaucratic obstacles from government officials who

were suspicious of a church originating within the Black community. Thus in 1917, the New Church Mission in Africa was associated with the General Conference of the New Church in Great Britain.

In 1927, David Mooki died at the age of fifty-one. Yet the Swedenborgian church he had founded sixteen years earlier remains active to this day, encompassing eighty-eight congregations in Black townships throughout eight of the nine provinces of South Africa, and one in the country of Lesotho. In 1929, Mooki Memorial College was founded in the township of Soweto, Johannesburg. The street on which the college is located has been aptly named Mooki Street. It is a major thoroughfare in the Orlando East section of Soweto, and has been recognized by the City of Johannesburg as a provincial heritage site.

In 1948, the Afrikaners' National Party gained power in South Africa. Unsatisfied with the level of control of the Black majority population, they codified and strengthened the apartheid system. They enriched their community at the expense of the Black majority. In 1961 they would convert South Africa to a republic and withdraw from the Commonwealth of Nations. Thereafter South Africa would find itself further isolated as the international community turned away from the stench of its apartheid.

After a long and costly struggle, Blacks finally achieved independence from white rule in 1994. A new democratic country was formed, whose first president was Nelson Mandela. However, the majority of Black South Africans today continue to live lives of deprivation in the long shadow of apartheid's crime against humanity.

In 1936, as apartheid was increasing,



Bishop M.E.J. Montsho & Rev. Lee Woofenden at the headquarters of the NCSA in Orlando East, Soweto, Johannesburg

David Mooki's second son, Obed Simon David Mooki, took up his father's mantle. That was the year he took up the post of General Secretary of the church. During his long and successful tenure, the NCSA grew into the largest Swedenborgian body in the world. However, his good work had to be done under the auspices of British New Church ministers serving as general superintendent of the church. Only in 1969, after the apartheid regime had changed the law in the previous year to allow it, was the Rev. Obed S.D. Mooki finally recognized as General Superintendent of the NCSA—a position he held until his death, in 1990, at the age of seventy-one.

On a visit to the U.S. in 1974, the Rev. Obed Mooki stayed at the home of the Rev. Dr. William and Louise Woofenden, where he made quite the impression on their son, my future husband, Lee Woofenden. Lee recalls the story of Rev. Mooki, a tall man of elegance and poise, commencing a speech to his American audience by stating in

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Journey to South Africa

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his rich baritone voice, “My name... is Mooki” (pronounced Mu-o-kee, three syllables). In 2020, nearly half a century later, with the memory of Obed and Eulalia Mooki still imprinted upon his mind, the Rev. Lee Woofenden would make the reverse journey from the U.S. to South Africa to join the faculty of Mooki Memorial College.

When Lee and I first visited Soweto in 2018, we discovered an amazing, welcoming New Church community, led by their pastor, Mpho Ernest John Montsho. As Rev. Montsho gave us a tour, his love for Swedenborg’s teachings, for the Mookis, and for the NCSA were readily evident. On the church property are the church building itself, which has wings for the seminary and its library, plus several residences, including a dormitory and a parsonage. We were shown classrooms and offices, but being bibliophiles, the highlight for us came as we approached the library.

We anticipated gaps in their collection. Perhaps they wouldn’t have the New Century Edition of Swedenborg’s writings—a simple gift we could easily rectify. However, I struggled to quell my quivering jaw as Rev. Montsho led us into the room. There we encountered old, worn, and moldy books on once elegant but now dilapidated

shelving dating from when the library was built in 1929. This was not a library fit for the only Swedenborgian seminary on the African continent.

Our first church service at the Soweto church had us worshipping with a congregation of 250 people! We have since worshipped at several other churches of the NCSA, and have marveled at the large numbers in attendance.

While the legacy of apartheid has been unkind to the church, it has failed to break the spirit of these township Swedenborgians. In their simple but beautiful structures, church services are spirited affairs that include lots of singing, dancing, and testimonials. Hearing the Swedenborgian Statement of Faith in African languages quickens my heart every time.

Following that first church service, we were invited to the family home of one of the members. An outdoor buffet had been set up, and we ate at long tables in the garage. At one point in the conversation, Rev. Montsho directly addressed me, asking what I thought of their library. The question caught me completely off guard.

There was so much I wanted to say...that the library broke my heart, but also inspired in me an awe and profound respect for them. I wanted to say that they must really want to be Swedenborgians, because it takes a lifetime to learn Swedenborgian

theology—and that is with materials readily available. I wanted to say that their library is testament to their fortitude.

Silence hung in the air as all the ministers stopped eating to look at me, awaiting a response that my tongue-tied self couldn’t formulate. I felt my face flush at the sudden, direct attention. Lee rescued me. “She’s trying to think of something nice to say,” he said, followed by, “She thinks your library needs work.” At which they erupted into raucous laughter.

On returning to the United States, we went to work acquiring books for their library—a quest that continues.

In late January, 2020, we finally managed to move ourselves and our dog and three cats to Soweto, South Africa. Being on the NCSA property means that we are privileged to live in a gated community on a high grassy ridge offering spacious views of the surrounding area. We have the gate. We have the community. What’s missing is the wall around the property—an important little detail when one is bringing valuable material possessions to an impoverished area. Lee has an extensive personal collection of Swedenborgian books. I have an extensive collection of secular books. Also included in our shipping container were over fifty boxes of books for the Mooki Memorial College library. These material

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Regional gathering at the New Church in Saulsville, Pretoria, northern Gauteng province

Passages

Births

Ffion Louise Grams

Grams was born on May 23, 2020, at home in New Sharon, Maine, to Sarah and Troy Grams, active members of the Fryeburg New Church Assembly. Grandparents are Laura and Harold Grams; Great-Grandparents are the late Bill and Louise Woofenden. ☩



The Name of the Lord

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of the living God!" Christ, from the Greek *christos*, meaning "the anointed one." To be anointed with oil indicated a special status: set apart or "holy." Something was happening.

YES: Perhaps we can say that, rather than Jesus Christ being a new name for God, "the Lord" (*Yahweh*) becomes a new name for Jesus, after his glorification, his attainment of unity with the Father (*Elohim*). According to Swedenborg, the name of Jesus Christ contains within it reference to Divine Love and Wisdom itself. As Divine

Love, the Lord heals and forgives, he saves and frees, he protects and nurtures. As Divine Truth, the Lord teaches and enlightens, he knows and understands, he discerns and judges.

The story of the Bible, the story of Jesus, and the story of our lives, can be seen as one of a gradual convergence and unity of these two "names" of God, these twin qualities of *Elohim* and *Yahweh*, Creator and Redeemer. In Jesus, the universal and the particular, the transcendent and the imminent are united, made one. The God beyond all space and time becomes the Lord in every space and time, incarnated and historically existent. The visible God in whom is the invisible God. ☩

Blessed be the name of the Lord (Psalm 113:2).

Rev. Robert McCluskey is chair of the Social Justice Committee, and member of the Standing Committee on Educational Resources.



Journey to South Africa

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The arrival of the 20' shipping container that carried our books and belongings to South Africa

possessions are worth more to us than all the gold in the world.

Packing massive quantities of books turned out to be tricky. How to find cardboard cartons of the right shape and strength to support their weight? The answer: used liquor boxes! Thinking ourselves clever, we rejoiced as we watched the filled shipping container depart our Wyoming home.

We arrived in South Africa just as our container was being loaded onto a container ship at the Port of Oakland, California. Praying for the ship's safe passage, we tracked the ship's progress, blissfully unaware of the corona clouds swirling overhead as the ship sailed towards Asia.

By the time the ship reached Hong Kong, concern about COVID-19 was spreading across the African continent. Residents of African nations watched with trepidation the havoc this new virus was causing to wealthier and better resourced nations. In South Africa, we were aware that the pandemic was on its way, and with it some form of lockdown that would shut down the country.

As Asia started locking down and South Africa began closing some of its ports, we watched agonizingly as the ship slowly sailed onward to Singapore and then across the Indian Ocean to Durban. In March, we were told that it could take up to a month for our container to make it to Johannesburg from Durban due to the poor condition of the railways. Moreover, theft of railway cargo was also a possibility, especially if a lockdown halted our container in its tracks. It therefore came as a pleasant surprise when the shipping company called to say that our container was in Johannesburg, and they wanted to deliver it forthwith. (A week later, South Africa would be under the most severe lockdown in the world.)

We were giddy when a big truck delivered our container and its priceless cargo. Sensing the danger that the

attraction of the truck would bring, Rev. (now Bishop) Montsho instructed that it be offloaded into the church. So it was that liquor box after liquor box went into the seminary library, prompting one of the workers to remark, "This is making me thirsty!"

Relieved that the books had arrived safely, but emotionally and physically spent, that night we slept soundly through the Bishop's text alerting us to a break-in at the library. ☩

The conclusion will be printed in the next issue of *the Messenger*.



Annette Woofenden is living in Soweto, South Africa, with her husband, three cats, and her dog. She is studying two African languages: isiZulu and Sesotho. She is also learning to drive like a Sowetan.

Virtual Camps this Summer

Almont Summer School

July 19th to 25th

www.almontretreats.com

This summer's Almont Camp has been canceled. Given the highly contagious nature of this pandemic and the threat it poses, we could not find a way to hold camp with social distancing and cleaning.

Our tradition says God only allows things to happen that good can come from, so we will have a virtual camp session during our usual camp week. This does not mean the magical daily structure of camp will be mandated or transform your home, but it does mean we will work hard to virtually present some highlights of camp throughout the week. The Reverends Billings, Cole, Lee, and Machiniak are already on board for presenting virtual talks on Community (a topic of importance in this time of isolation for all of us). We will also be working on ways to have chapels and some of our other loved events as we are able. We will be looking at ways for the various age groups to gather virtually and participate in some age specific activities.

Please consider donating a portion of what you would normally pay to attend camp to Almont. <https://almontretreats.com/support-us.html>

Paulhaven Children's Camp

July 19th to 24th

www.paulhaven.com

It is with great sadness that Paulhaven Children's Camp 2020 has been canceled. Our Camp Committee is working on putting together a virtual camp for youth ages 10–18. As we transition from a live camp to going virtual, we are still in the process of recruiting staff into the virtual world. We have outlined a program (themed *The Hidden Foe*), based on our usual camp, with a few more options.

Join us for a week of learning, playing, and worship, alone but together. Camper Registration \$25.00 Canadian dollars. Deadline for registration is July 5, 2020.

A short supply list and schedule will be emailed to participants once they have registered. We are looking forward to "seeing" everyone!

Youth interested in attending, or for information, you can email paulhaven.camp@gmail.com



Fryeburg New Church Assembly

August 1st to 9th

www.fryeburg.org

The Board of Directors of the Fryeburg New Church Assembly, at a special meeting, decided to cancel the physical 2020 camp session and hold a Virtual FNCA Summer Session instead. A Virtual Committee was formed and had their first meeting in mid-May. Exciting things are being planned that will allow people everywhere to join in the wonders of the FNCA camp session this summer!

Although the physical camp session usually lasts two weeks, at the request of the Board's, this summer's virtual FNCA camp session will be running only one week.

We are hoping to follow our traditional schedule as much as possible. The [Dole 3 Miler Road Race](#) will also be held virtually this year. There are already established protocols for virtual races, with runners registering for a race and running it in their own neighborhood on their own schedule and sending in their official times via Fitbit on simply on the honor system.

We will miss seeing campers in person; we are looking forward to opening up the FNCA to Swedenborgians worldwide this summer!